

POQUOSON

May 31 - June 6, 2000

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Poquoson celebrates Silver Anniversary

The history of Poquoson (pa-kos-en) dates back to the 1600s, when Capt. Christopher Calthroppe was issued a land grant on April 26, 1631.

Poquoson means "low ground" or "swamp," an appropriate name for a 15 square-mile, largely residential community bordered on three sides by water and marshland. The Poquoson River, to the north, joins the Chesapeake Bay on the east. The Back River, to the south, separates the city from Langley Air Force Base, which is part of Hampton.

Since that first land grant, the people of Poquoson have relied on

the water for their livelihood. Affectionately called "watermen," for nearly four centuries, they have crabbed, clammed or dug oysters from the surrounding waters. By the 1800s, seafood became a bustling business. Watermen would sell crabs and oysters, as well as other bounty from the sea, at nearby markets in Norfolk.

Seafood is still the largest industry in Poquoson today. Although oysters aren't as abundant as they were in the early days of the city's history, many Poquoson watermen continue to harvest the waters for oysters and clams, as well as crab and other varieties of seafood.

Messick Point and a number of other areas around Poquoson are "home" to the farmers of the sea.

Poquoson even hosts an annual seafood festival every fall, drawing residents from all over the Peninsula and Southside for a taste of hospitality, Poquoson-style.

Poquoson's schools are often referred to as the reason for its metamorphosis into a city.

The first high school in Poquoson was a two-story wood-framed structure built in 1910 for \$6,000.

Located on the property now occupied by Poquoson Middle School, the high school housed the entire student body, from grades one

through 12. There was no central heat, running water, electricity or indoor toilets. Each room was heated individually by a metal stove called a King Heater. Students were responsible for lugging the wood for the stove into the school each day.

In 1932, a brick high school was built. Students included those from York County, as well as Poquoson.

In 1952, the town of Poquoson became incorporated, in order to retain control over its schools. Following incorporation, a new elementary school was built just south of the original high school on Poquoson Avenue. At that time, the original wood-framed building was torn down. York County students continued to attend Poquoson High School for several years, until the present York High School was completed.

In 1975, 25 years ago, Poquoson became a city.

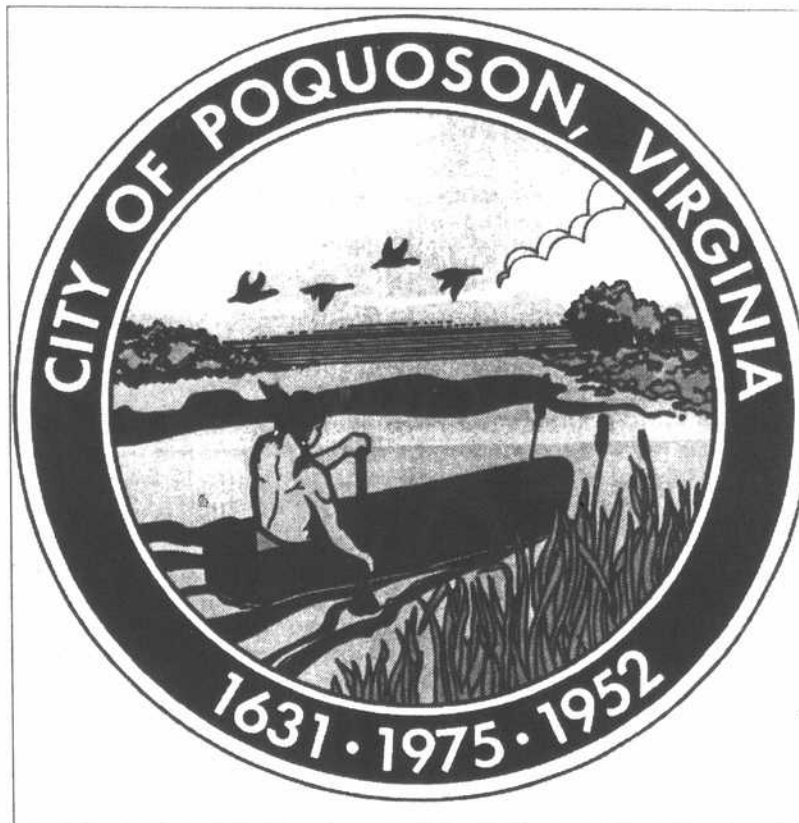
Today, it has four schools, including a primary, elementary, middle and high school.

The city continues to grow, as well. A new City Hall and Library complex were completed in 1997. Soon after, the Poquoson branch office of Langley Federal Credit Union was completed.

A \$5.5 million expansion and renovation project on the current high school was finished.

Business continues to be drawn into the city, as well. The Poquoson Commons shopping center now has a new free-standing Eckerd's Drug Store and will soon boast a free-standing Food Lion. A Dollar General Department Store nears opening. And across the street from the Dollar General, a new Xpress Lube is now open for business.

As the present moves forward, the city's future continues to be a top priority for city leadership.



Poquoson's city seal reflects its transition from land grant to town to city.



As always, there will be plenty of activities for children to enjoy at the anniversary party.

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